

The Book of Galatians

Lesson 13: Glorifying Only in the Cross -- Galatians 6:11-18

At the end of a long, urgent letter, Paul takes the pen from his secretary into his own hand. "See with what large letters I am writing to you," he says, and you can almost picture it, the big, deliberate strokes of a man who wants his final words underlined and unmistakable. Everything he has fought for through six chapters comes down to what he writes here, in his own handwriting, in letters too large to miss.

And what he wants to leave ringing in their ears is a contrast between two kinds of religion. There are those who want to make a good showing in the flesh, who push circumcision so they can avoid persecution and boast about their converts. Their faith is about appearances, reputation, and self-protection. They want something to brag about. Paul has watched this kind of religion nearly destroy a church he loves, and he has no patience left for it.

Then he plants his flag one last time, in words that have echoed for two thousand years: "Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Everything the world chases after, status, approval, achievement, the things we are tempted to glory in, has been crucified to Paul, and he to it. The cross has reorganized his entire universe. The only thing left worth boasting about is what Jesus did for him there.

And so the whole letter lands on one breathtaking phrase: "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but a new creation." Not your religious credentials. Not your performance. Not your background. A new creation, made by the cross, is what matters. As we finish this study of Galatians, let that be the word we carry out the door. In Christ you are made new, and the cross is the only glory you will ever need.

Group Discussion: Paul says, "Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (6:14). What kinds of things are people, including church people, most tempted to boast in or find their identity in, and what would it look like for the cross to become our only boast?

Personal Reflection: Paul says the world has been "crucified to me, and I to the world" (6:14). Where does the world, its approval, its values, its rewards, still have a strong hold on your heart, and what would it mean for the cross to loosen that grip?

Read Galatians 6:11-18

Study Questions

1. Paul exposes the false teachers, saying they want "to make a good showing in the flesh" and to avoid being "persecuted for the cross of Christ," so that "they may boast in your flesh"

(6:12–13). What drives religious people toward external show, and what do these motives reveal about the difference between true and false religion?

2. Paul unmasks self-protective, reputation-seeking religion. Examine your own heart: are there ways you serve God or practice your faith mainly to look good to others or to avoid difficulty, and how would you know?
3. Paul declares, “Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (6:14). What does it mean to boast only in the cross, and why is the cross the one and only thing in which a Christian can rightly glory?
4. Paul found his entire significance in the cross. What, besides the cross, do you most tend to boast in or build your sense of worth upon, and how does the cross challenge that?
5. Paul says that through the cross “the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (6:14). What is this mutual crucifixion between the believer and the world, and how does the cross change our whole relationship to the world and its values?
6. Paul lived as one dead to the world’s pull. Where does the world still have a strong grip on you, in its approval, its possessions, its definitions of success, and how is the cross calling you to die to that grip?
7. Paul writes that “neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything,” and pronounces peace upon all who walk by this rule, “and upon the Israel of God” (6:15–16). What does it mean that God’s true people, the Israel of God, are now defined by the cross and new creation rather than by ethnicity or external markers?
8. Paul says the only thing that counts is being “a new creation.” As you look at your own life, where do you see evidence that the old has passed and the new has come, and where do you still long for the new creation to take fuller shape in you?
9. Paul brings the whole letter to its climax: “neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but a new creation” (6:15). How does this one phrase sum up everything Galatians has taught, that what matters before God is not external religion or human effort but a new creation wrought through the cross, and how is that new life entered and lived?
10. Look back across this whole study of Galatians. Paul ends by praying that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ would be with our spirit (6:18). Name one specific way Jesus is calling you, from now on, to glory only in the cross and to live as the new creation he has made you to be.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: 2 Corinthians 5:17, anyone in Christ as a new creation; 1 Corinthians 1:18–31, boasting only in the Lord and the cross; Philippians 3:7–11, counting everything loss for the surpassing worth of Christ; Romans 6:3–6, buried with Christ in baptism and raised to newness of life; Ephesians 2:8–10, saved by grace as God’s new workmanship.